

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AGR-20 SWF-02 DODE-00 PA-04

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 DRC-01 /092 W

----- 123848

R 192010Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9601

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, GY

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS IN SUGAR INDUSTRY LABOR SITUATION

REF: GEORGETOWN 0160

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING FAILURE OF LABOR MINISTER CARRINGTON'S WAGES COUNCIL PLAN TO GAIN SUPPORT, IT NOW APPEARS SUGAR INDUSTRY OFFICIALS PREPARED EVENTUALLY TO RECOGNIZE GUYANA AGRICULTURAL WORKERS UNION (GAWU), LABOR ARM OF OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY, A JEANS OF ACHIEVING LABOR PEACE. SUGAR INDUSTRY OFFICIALS SEEM WILLING TO TAKE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY THIS YEAR TO DETERMINE WHETHER GAWU SHOULD REPLACE CURRENTLY RECOGNIZED UNION, MANPOWER CITIZENS ASSOCIATION (MPCA). ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT YET CLEAR GOVT READY TO ACCEPT SURVEY, AND SURVEY COULD HAVE SEVERAL OUTCOMES, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND PERSONAL FACTORS FAVOR RECOGNITION OF GAWU OVER MPCA. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING FAILURE OF LABOR MINISTER CARRINGTON'S PLAN FOR SUGAR WAGES COUNCIL TO GAIN SUPPORT, SUGAR INDUSTRY OFFICIALS SEEM TO BE MOVING TOWARD RECOGNITION OF GUYANA AGRICULTURAL

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WORKERS UNION (GAWU), LABOR ARM OF PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE

PARTY (PPP), AS SOLUTION TO LABOR PROBLEMS IN SUGAR INDUSTRY. CARRINGTON HAD PROPOSED COUNCIL (REFTEL) AS MEANS OF ENDING LONGSTANDING RECOGNITION DISPUTE BETWEEN MANPOWER CITIZENS ASSOCIATION (MPCA) AND ITS UNRECOGNIZED RIVAL, GAWU. CARRINGTON'S PLTPOSAL, HOWEVER, MET WITH OPPOSITION FROM MPCA (RECOGNIZED UNION FOR FIELD AND FACTORY WORKERS), GAWU (UNRECOGNIZED UNION FOR FIELD AND FACTORY WORKERS), AND NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL, CLERICAL, AND INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES (NAACIE, RECOGNIZED UNION FOR CLERICAL WORKERS). ONLY UNION OF AGRICULTURAL AND ALLIED WORKERS (UAAW, UNRECOGNIZED GOVT ORIENTED UNION FOR FIELD AND FACTORY WORKERS) SUPPORTED LABOR MINISTER. NOW, SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN AMB AND CHAIRMAN OF SUGAR PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SPA), AND EMBOFF AND SPA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICER, STRONGLY SUGGEST SPA PREPARED TO INITIATE STEPS TO RECOGNIZE GAWU.

3. CHAIRMAN OF SPA TOLD AMB THAT SPA PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE GAWU AND HAD INDICATIONS GOVT WOULD ACCEPT THAT DECISION DESPITE GAWU'S TIES WITH OPPOSITION PPP. SPA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICER(DYAL) FURTHER ELABORATED ON MEETINGS BETWEEN SPA AND HARRY LALL, GAWU PRESIDENT. DYAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT LALL AGREED TO MEMBERSHIP SURVEY TO DETERMINE WHICH UNION HAS MAJORITY SUPPORT AMONG WORKERS. IN PAST LALL HAS ALWAYS INSISTED ON SIMPLE PREFERENCE POLL TO DETERMINE UNION RECOGNITION. LALL TOLD SPA THAT HE NEEDS THREE MONTHS TO PREPARE HIS MEMBERSHIP RECORDS. ACCORDING TO DYAL, SPA NOW WAITING FOR GAWU RECORDS AND WILL SOON CALL IN MPCA PRESIDENT RICHARD ISHMAEL AND ASK FOR HIS RECORDS. PROCESSING OF MEMBERSHIP SURVEY LIKELY TO TAKE AT LEAST SEVERAL MONTHS. DYAL SAID SPA WOULD LIKE TO PLAY FOR TIME AND FINISH HARVESTING BOTH SPRING AND AUTUMN CROPS BEFORE ISSUE IS FINALLY RESOLVED.

4. AT THIS TIME GOVT ATTITUDE TOWARD SURVEY AND POSSIBLE GAWU RECOGNITION IS NOT CERTAIN. CHIEF LABOR OFFICER (SINGH) TOLD EMBOFF NO FINAL DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE AND HE PERSONALLY BELIEVES NO SURVEY WILL BE MADE. SINGH, WHO HIMSELF FAVORS GAWU RECOGNITION, FEELS MINISTER OF LABOR STILL CLINGING TO WAGES COUNCIL AND RELUCTANT TO SEE GAWU RECOGNIZED. ACCORDING TO SINGH, SPA WILL HAVE TO GO OVER LABOR MINISTER'S HEAD TO PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM IF IT WISHES TO SEE GAWU RECOGNIZED.

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5. IF GOVT DOES GIVE ITS APPROVAL AND MEMBERSHIP SURVEY IS TAKEN, SEVERAL OUTCOMES ARE POSSIBLE:

A. MPCA AND GAWU BOTH HAVING OVER FIFTY PERCENT OF WORKERS AS MEMBERS: BECAUSE OF DUAL MEMBERSHIP BOTH GAWU AND MPCA MAY HAVE OVERFIFTY PERCENT MEMBERSHIP. CURRENTLY GAWU IS UNDERTAKING "WITHDRAWAL" CAMPAIGN ASKING ITS MEMBERS

TO END MPCA MEMBERSHIP. IF THIS DOES NOT CLARIFY SITUATION, MEMBERSHIP SURVEY MAY FAIL AND SIMPLE PREFERENCE POLL WILL BE NEEDED TO FIND WORKERS' CHOICE.

B. MPCA HAVING OVER FIFTY PERCENT OF WORKERS AS MEMBERS:  
ACCORDING TO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICER AT SPA, MPCA NOW HAS FIFTY-TWO PERCENT OF WORKERS, AND THAT NUMBER IS CONSTANTLY DECREASING BECAUSE OF WITHDRAWALS EVEN FROM SUPPOSED MPCA STRONGHOLDS. IN EVENT THAT SURVEY SHOWS MPCA MAJORITY, LALL HAS TOLD SPA THAT GAWU WOULD REFRAIN FROM RECOGNITION CLAIMS FOR THREE YEARS.

C. GAWU HAVING OVER FIFTY PERCENT OF WORKERS AS MEMBERS:  
IF GAWU IS SUCCESSFUL IN EFFORT TO BE RECOGNIZED BARGAINING AGENT, GOVT AND INDUSTRY SOURCES BELIEVE INITIALLY GAWU WOULD ACT RESPONSIBLY AND NOT BE MANIPULATED BY OPPOSITION PPP. ACCORDING TO SPA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICER, MINISTER OF LABOR TOLD HIM THAT GAWU OFFICIALS HAD REJECTED BID BY CHEDDI JAGAN, LEADER OF PPP AND HONORARY PRESIDENT OF GAWU, TO HEAD TEAM WHICH MET WITH SPA. THIS INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE BY GAWU IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE IN SHORT RUN.

6. IN MEANTIME, WEEK-LONG WILDCAT STRIKE AT LARGE ALBION SUGAR ESTATE SHOWS INABILITY OF ANY UNION TO CONTROL WORKERSM DESPITE BACK TO WORK CALL BY HARRY LALL, LOCAL GAWU LEADER IS KEEPING WORKERS OFF JOBS DUE TO LOCAL GRIEVANCES.

7. COMMENT: FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, STRIKES, VIOLENCE, AND ENDLESS MANEUVERING HAVE FAILED TO DISLODGE MPCA AS RECOGNIZED SUGAR WORKERS'S UNION. NOW, POWERFUL ALIGNMENT OF FORCES FAVORS BREAK WITH PAST. POLITICALLY, GOVT IS CONFIDENT OF ITS ABILITY TO HANDLE PPP; ECONOMICALLY, THERE IS NEED FOR LABOR PEACE IN SUGAR INDUSTRY TO BOOST SUGAR EXPORTS AND EARN FOREIGN EXCHANGE;  
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SOCIALLY, THERE ARE REAL GRIEVANCES OF WORKERS WHICH MPCA HAS FAILED TO HANDLE; AND PERSONALLY, THERE EXISTS STRONG ANIMOSITY BETWEEN MINISTER OF LABOR AND MPCA PRESIDENT ISHMAEL. ALL THESE SIGNS POINT TOWARD EVENTUAL RECOGNITION OF GAWU. KREBS

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SUGAR, RECOGNITION, MEMBERSHIP, EXPORTS, LABOR UNIONS, AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, SURVEYS, LABOR OBJECTIVES, FOREIGN EXCHANGE  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 19 APR 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** MorefiRH  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1974GEORGE00603  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D740092-0571  
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**Line Count:** 158  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EB  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** GEORGETOWN 0160  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** MorefiRH  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 10 SEP 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <12-Sep-2002 by MorefiRH>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** DEVELOPMENTS IN SUGAR INDUSTRY LABOR SITUATION  
**TAGS:** ELAB, PINT, GY, GUYANA AGRICULTURAL WORKERS UNION, MANPOWER CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, MPCA, GWUA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005